

Things You Never Forget

LITTLE CONTRADE

The Adventures of a New York Man and a Woman Spy in the Present War

By BURTON L. STEVENSON

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STORY OF FORTHRIGHT CHAPTER.

Stewart, a young American, was on his way home from a medical conference at Vienna and had arrived at the hotel at midnight. He was alone in the room, and he was looking at the clock when he heard a knock. He opened the door and found a young woman standing in the doorway. She was looking at him with a curious expression.

CHAPTER V.
The Snare.

As the three men advanced to the table Stewart saw that they were armed with short swords and that each of them carried a heavy pistol at his belt.

"You speak German?" one of them asked.

"A little. But I would prefer to speak English," answered Stewart.

"We will speak German. What is your nationality?"

"I am an American."

"Where were you born in America?"

"New York."

"Have you a passport?"

"Yes."

"Let me see it."

Stewart was about to reach into his pocket and produce it, when he remembered his companion's suggestion. So he felt in one pocket after another without result, while the Germans shifted impatiently from foot to foot.

"It must be in my other coat," he said, half to himself, enjoying the situation immensely. "But not I do not remember changing it. Ah, here it is!"

He drew the paper forth and handed it to the officer, who took it, unfolded it, and stepped out into the court, where the light was better. He read it through carefully, compared the description point by point with Stewart's appearance and then came back to the table.

"Who is this person?" he asked, and nodded toward the girl.

"She is my wife," answered Stewart, with a readiness which astonished himself.

"Did not arrive here with you?"

"No," and he told the story of how he had left her at Spa to recuperate from a slight nervous attack, while he himself went on to Vienna. He omitted no detail. Indeed, he improvised a few new ones, and with his limited German—which his hearers regarded with evident contempt—the story took some time to tell.

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"What is the matter?" she demanded petulantly. "I never knew you were such a talker, Tommy! Tell them to go away; they are ugly and they annoy me."

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Stewart was certain that at least one of them knew English, so he judged it best to translate literally.

"She wants to know what is the matter," he answered. "She asks me to tell you to go away—that you annoy her."

"The officer smiled grimly.

"She does not understand German?"

"Not a word," said Stewart glibly.

"What is her name?"

"Mary."

"Her maiden name?"

"Mary Agnes Fleming," answered Stewart, repeating the first name that occurred to him, and thanking his stars that the officers could scarcely be acquainted with the earlier life of an American spy.

"Is that correct?" asked the policeman suddenly, turning upon her.

Stewart's heart gave a leap of fear; but after a start he turned to the officer and said:

"Was he speaking to me, Tommy?" she asked.

It was only by a heroic effort that Stewart choked back the sudden snort of laughter that rose in his throat.

"Yes," he managed to answer; "he wants to know your maiden name."

"What on earth?"

"I don't know; but you'd better tell him."

"My maiden name was Mary Agnes Fleming," she said, looking at the officer with evident disapprobation. "Though what business it is of yours I can't see."

"What does she say?" demanded the policeman, and again Stewart translated literally.

"The officer stood staring intently at both of them. At the lady, with a flash of indignation, turned her back.

"Really, Tommy," she said over her shoulder, "if you don't get rid of this brute, I shall never speak to you again!"

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"I will look at her passport," said the German suddenly, and held out his hand.

"My passport is for both of us," Stewart explained. "Those words, 'accompanied by his wife,' make it inclusive."

"The officer went out into the light again and examined the words with minute attention.

"I find no description of her," he said, coming back.

"There is none," answered Stewart impatiently. "But there is a description of me, as you see. The passport adds that I am accompanied by my wife. I tell you that this lady is my wife. That is sufficient."

"The officer glanced at his companion uncertainly. Then he slowly folded up the passport and handed it back.

"When do you depart from Aachen?" he asked.

"By the first train for Brussels, I am told that it will arrive in about half an hour."

"Very well," said the other. "I regret if I have assumed incorrectly, but the fact that the lady did not arrive with you appeared to me singular. I will report your explanation to my chief."

He turned on his heel and stalked away, followed by his men. Stewart drew a deep breath.

"Well," he began, when he was stopped by a sharp tap from his companion's foot.

"Such impudence!" she cried. "I was astonished at your politeness, Tommy! You, an American, letting a Prussian policeman bulldoze you like that! I am ashamed of you!"

Glaucous-eyed, Stewart saw the hound-dog Hans hovering in the doorway.

"He was a big policeman, my dear," he explained, laughing. "I shouldn't have had much of a chance with him. How could I have done so much? If we want to get to Brussels the safest plan is to answer calmly all the questions the police can think of. That is the way for us to be going. There will be no reserved seats on this train!"

"You are right," agreed his companion. "I am quite ready."

No he asked for the bill, paid it, sent Hans up for his luggage, and presently they were walking toward the station, with the waiter staggering along behind.

Stewart, looking down at his companion, felt more and more elated over the adventure. He had never passed a pleasanter evening; it had just the touch of excitement needed to give it relish. Unfortunately, its end was near; in an hour or two a crowded railway carriage, and—that was all.

He glanced up at him and caught his eye.

"What is it, my friend?" she asked.

"I was just thinking," answered Stewart. "That I do not even know you."

"Speak lower," she said quickly. "Or, better still, do not say such things at all. Do not drop the mask for an instant until we are out of Germany."

"Very well," Stewart promised. "But once we are across the border I warn you that I shall have certain very serious things to say."

"And I promise to listen patiently," she answered, smiling.

At the entrance to the station they were stopped by the guard, who demanded their tickets. Stewart was about to produce his when his companion touched him on the arm.

"Run and get that ticket, Tommy," she said. "I will wait here."

As he hastened away Stewart trembled to think how nearly he had bluffed his way out of the place. He explained to the authorities the fact that he was traveling with a book of Cook's circular tickets, while his wife was waiting for her ticket from station to station.

There was a long line of people in front of the ticket office and their progress was slow, for two police officers were standing by, and were interrogating every applicant for a ticket before they would permit it to be given to him.

As he moved slowly forward Stewart saw that the place was crowded. He wondered uncomfortably if the officers had any instructions with regard to him, but when his turn came he was able to pass as calmly as he was able. He explained that he and his wife were going to Brussels, showed his passport, and the two precious bits of pasteboard.

It seemed to him that the last difficulty had been encountered and overcome, and it was only by an effort that he kept himself from saying "What a relief!"

The tickets in the air as he rejoined his companion. In another moment they were past the barrier. Hans was permitted to enter with them and mounted guard over the luggage.

The platform was thronged with a motley and excited crowd, among whom were many officers in long gray coats and trailing swords, evidently on their way to join their commands. Stewart was watching them with an interest perhaps a little too apparent, for his companion suddenly passed her arm through his.

"I should like a little walk," she said. "I have been sitting too long. It is good of you to write so regularly while you were in Vienna," she rattled on as they started along the platform. "I am sure your letters helped with my cure. But you have not told me—have you secured our passage?"

"I shall know when we get to Brussels," Stewart was trying to get up an outside room on the Adriatic.

"Do we go back to England?"

"Not unless we wish to. We can sail from Cherbourg."

They had reached the end of the platform and, turning suddenly, Stewart found himself face to face with a bearded German who had been close behind them and who shot a sharp glance at him and his companion before stepping aside with a muttered apology. Not until they had passed him did Stewart remember that he had seen the man before. It was a passenger who had stared his crowded compartment of the journey from Cologne.

His companion had not seemed to notice the fellow, and went on talking of the voyage home, and how glad she would be to get there. Not until they turned again at the farther end, and found the platform for a moment clear around them, did she relax her guard.

"That man is trying to get us an outside room on the Adriatic," she whispered quickly. "We are evidently still suspected. What sort of railroad ticket have you?"

"A book of Cook's coupons."

"I feared as much. You must get rid of it—it is quite possible that you will be searched at the frontier. No, no," she added, as Stewart put his hand in his pocket. "Not here. Yet."

The officer glanced at his companions uncertainly. Then he slowly folded up the passport and handed it back.

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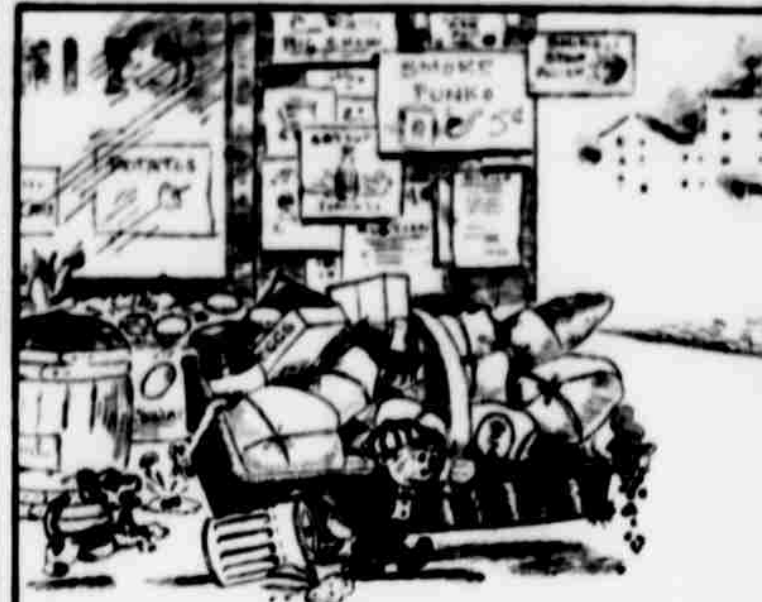
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YOUR FIRST JOB...



YOUR FIRST HAIR-CUT...



YOUR FIRST RAISE...



YOUR FIRST LONG PANTS...

KEITH OF THE BORDER

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